

NOTES OF A MEETING OF THE CHAIRS AND VICE-CHAIRS OF THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEES AND THE STANDARDS AND AUDIT COMMITTEES HELD AT COUNTY HALL, LLANDRINDOD WELLS ON FRIDAY 28TH JANUARY 2011

PRESENT: County Councillor J. H. Brunt (Chair)
County Councillors A. W. Davies, Mrs S. C. Davies, D. Price, Mrs J.G. Shearer, Mrs D. G. Thomas and Independent Member R. Miller.

Officers in Attendance: Clarence Meredith (Strategic Director – Law and Governance), Sue Glenn (Corporate Consultation Officer), Wyn Richards (Scrutiny Services Manager), Lisa Richards (Senior Committee Clerk), Liz Patterson (Committee Clerk).

1. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mrs K. Roberts-Jones, J. G. Morris, G. Morgan and Independent Member P. Swanson.

2. Notes of last meeting

The notes of the meeting held on 6th December 2010 were received.

3. Use of SIMALTO and other surveys for scrutiny.

The Corporate Consultation Officer circulated a Fact Sheet which outlined the types of survey work undertaken and how they could be utilised for scrutiny. (Copy on file)

The Residents Survey was an annual telephone survey of approximately 1,000 residents identified to ensure the correct mix of urban/rural residents are chosen along with the correct proportion of different aged respondents.

The results are analysed on a Local Environment Initiative area basis then by the four larger areas identified by the Office for National Statistics.

It was confirmed that the link to the Residents Survey would be published in the Members Bulletin.

The annual Residents Survey covers items such as refuse collection and service satisfaction can be monitored over time. In the case of refuse collection where changes are being piloted it will be necessary for the service area to undertake specific surveys to analyse the success of any pilots. The Residents Survey will identify any changes in customer satisfaction since the implementation of a pilot scheme.

Members requested further information on the Refuse Collection Pilot Schemes and the Scrutiny Services Manager suggested that a report from the Portfolio Holder be included in the Members Bulletin.

It was explained that the Residents Survey was a good tool for evidencing customer views and in particular would identify and measure the views of the silent majority,

The areas where the Scrutiny Committees could focus on were those areas which showed the lowest levels of satisfaction.

The second area of consultation the Council had recently undertaken was the SIMALTO budget consultation. Whilst this was used by the Board to determine the budget priorities it would also be of use to the Scrutiny Committees for Members to be aware of customer preferences.

Service areas undertake their own consultations on specific issues for example School Modernisation. The individual service areas would be able to provide Members with specific information on individual consultations.

Performance Management Officers were also able to provide information for Members.

The Council also has two Statistical Research Officers who maintain the website Powys-i which is a rich source of information.

4. Performance Management.

This item was deferred.

5. Allocation of Work/Work Programmes

(i) Board

It was confirmed that the Executive would be producing a Forward Work Programme after May.

(ii) Scrutiny Committees

Principal Scrutiny and Crime and Disorder Committee

No comments.

Corporate Governance Scrutiny Committee

The Contract Management Working Group was nearing completion.

People Scrutiny Committee

The large volume of work for this Committees agenda was noted and the Constitution Working Group advised that this would be addressed by the proposed changes.

Regeneration and Environment Scrutiny Committee

The Chair was encouraging the Working Groups to complete their work before May.

Audit Committee

The Committee had received reports on the New Models of Social Care and Grants for Voluntary Bodies. Both service areas would be monitored and further reports had been requested for the June meeting.

(iii) Chairs and Vice Chairs

Whilst individual scrutiny committees would scrutinise those sections of the budget pertaining to their areas of scrutiny, the chairs and vice chairs committee would scrutinise the whole budget.

The process for budget scrutiny was an important item to be discussed further at the next meeting.

6. The Constitution

The Working Group was looking at four scrutiny committees:

Modernisation and Improvement;
Learning and Leisure;
Environment, Crime and Disorder, and
Children, and Social Care and Health.

The Joint Chairs Committee would continue in its present form.

It will also be necessary to have a joint scrutiny committee with Ceredigion to scrutinise the Central Wales Shared Services Joint Committee. It will be possible to constitute this once the Local Measure has been enacted.

The Constitution Working Group had invited membership from all political groups. The proposals that the Working Group were drawing up would be sent to the political groups for consultation and Members were urged to ensure that full consideration was given to the proposals during this consultation period.

It was recognised that the constitution would need amending with the change from 4th Option to Leader and Cabinet, that the Local Measure may require additional changes. It was recognised that further changes to the constitution may be required once the new system was in operation and Members should accept the need for changes if the system needed amending.

The Local Government Measure will require the Audit Committee to include one Lay Member without which the committee will not be properly constituted.

7. Attendance by Portfolio Holders at Scrutiny Committees – Cllr John Brunt

It was confirmed that all Portfolio Holders received a copy of the scrutiny committee agenda pertinent to them. Some Portfolio Holders attended scrutiny committees as a matter of course, others attended when invited and some attended rarely. It was noted that the attendance of Portfolio Holders at scrutiny committees other than for their particular item should be monitored to ensure that debate amongst scrutiny members is not stifled.

The requirement for Portfolio Holders to sit at the top table had been implemented in People Scrutiny Committee and Audit Committee.

Cabinet Members at Council Protocol

It was confirmed that the Constitution Working Group would be recommending that Executive Members sit at the top table during Council meetings.

8. Authority for Members to attend courses

The Member Development Working Group is working on a process for approving Members to attend courses. It is proposed that in time the identification of courses for Members to attend will come from the individual Members Personal Development Review. These will be undertaken for those Members in receipt of a Special Responsibility Allowance initially before being rolled out to all Members.

9. Powys Teaching Health Board Merger update

This item had been covered at the meeting of Council on 27th January 2011.

10. Items for the next meeting 14th April 2011 – 10.00am

Ffynnon Training
Budget Scrutiny

Meeting finished 12.20pm.